

ON UNION IN MEDICINE.

WITH SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF HOMEOPATHY AND HOMEOPATHIC LITERATURE.

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A recent meeting of a County Medical Society a resolution was presented to the members, the purpose of which was to admit homeopaths and eclectics (under certain conditions) to membership. It was evident that a discussion of this question was deemed untimely by some of the more prominent members of the Society, as a motion to postpone such discussion indefinitely was quickly passed, no one dissenting. The question, however, has been raised, and it is not the first time that the idea of a united medical profession has been suggested. It was mentioned recently in the farewell speech of Dr. Osler, at Baltimore. "Squabbles about drugs," said he, "should no longer separate men with the same hopes."

During the last twenty years, in fact since he came to this country, the writer has made use of homeopathic medical literature. He has never taken it seriously, but rather has used it in the same way as he might use Don Quixote, Alice in Wonderland, or Mark Twain. In that short, quiet hour just before midnight, when the house is still, if too tired for the latest number of a scientific journal, what more handy or more amusing reading than any of the three mentioned above, to which the writer would add homeopathy? And some parts of homeopathic literature are just as amusing as "The Hunting of the Snark," and as closely related to the trend and spirit of modern medicine as Don Quixote was to the stern realities of life. This, however, does not apply to all homeopathic literature, nor even to the greater part of it.

Using three recent volumes of *Transactions of the Homeopathic Medical Society of the State of New York*, it will be found that from one-half to three-fourths is made up of papers and addresses by men who are evidently *true students of medicine* in the best sense of these words. This is particularly noticed in those articles devoted to the specialties, Eye, Nose, and Throat. In these articles the subjects discussed are treated in

no way different from that in which they would be discussed in any other medical work. Dr. F. P. Lewis, of Buffalo, speaking on this subject, says:

"Still more startling is the volume of the Homeopathic Ophthalmological, Otological and Laryngological Society for the year 1899. The Society consists of one hundred and fifty members. The volume is a bulky quarto of 326 pages. Among the entire number of papers is found *not one lone essay* upon the single subject that gives the Society a right of separate existence."

This address by Dr. Lewis (*Transactions*, 1900) is full of common sense and well worth reading by any one interested in a united profession.

If, then, the homeopaths who are practising specially on the eye, ear, or throat, are willing to admit that in treating the diseases of these organs, homeopathy is of so little use, that when they come together to discuss their work, or when they write papers for publication on their work, they can do so without any reference to homeopathy, surely it is time for the other side to yield something, and admit such fellow-workers as are willing to make such admissions, into their meetings and associations. And what has been said in regard to the eye or ear surgeon, can surely be said of the general surgeon. We have laughed heartily over the absurdity of homeopathic surgery; and it is no less absurd in 1906 than it was in 1886; but let us forgive and forget, and if a man is a surgeon and doing good surgical work, and, further, if he is willing to admit that surgery has nothing to do with a certain law or rule for the choice of drugs, then he should be admitted to the society of others doing the same work and having the same hopes. The question of how and when to trephine the skull, or of the best method for relieving an enlarged prostate has as much to do with the doctrine of homeopathy as it has to do with the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Supposing all this to be accomplished and the doors of the County Society opened to all those homeopaths practising a specialty, or practising general surgery, with the condition that they are willing to drop any further reference to sectarianism; and supposing also that this invitation was accepted by any considerable number of them, it would still leave a majority of the homeopaths outside the County Societies who would still

meet and support their own county societies. Little might be accomplished at first in the way of a united profession, but much would be accomplished in the course of time.

A careful study of the homeopathic literature of the last decade shows that "the attention of their best minds is being occupied more with the important collaterals than with specific therapeutics" (Lewis. *Trans.*, 1900). This is so marked in the volumes of transactions under consideration that one can divide the papers and addresses into two classes. *First*, those on special subjects, for ordinary serious reading and study; and *second*, those on therapeutics, materia medica, and boasting, for light reading and amusement. These two classes of papers indicate two classes of men, *viz.*, those who have little or no use for the law of similars and drift into other work, more congenial, more satisfying, more profitable, and more in agreement with the spirit of modern medicine; and second, those who are enamored with the law of similars, and adhere to it more or less. If the doors of the County Societies were opened to those of the first class, and if any considerable number of that class joined the County Societies, then those remaining, though the majority, would find that their most intelligent members had left the homeopathic fold. It would take some time, however, to overcome certain, always admirable qualities possessed in plenty by homeopaths as by members of other societies; that is, pride of association, pride of Alma Mater, and *esprit de corps*.

Dr. Similia, whose grandaunt believed in homeopathy and paid all his expenses while he studied medicine at the homeopathic medical college, may by the time he is forty have given up general practice and homeopathy, to take up diseases of the eye or ear without homeopathy. He may admit, with Dr. Moffat, that "our homeopathic literature is full of trash, clinical and pathogenetic assertions in place of demonstrations" (*Trans.*, 1903); or with Dr. Lewis, "that not a single distinctly homeopathic fact has been added to our therapeutic armamentarium during the past twenty-five years" (*Trans.*, 1900).

Even though his medical college was not *his* choice, but depended on the whim of an amiable old lady, who, like many others of her class and time, believed in homeopathy, he may have enough *esprit de corps* to resist his later matured convictions and adhere to his earlier associations. If, however, his matured convictions were strong enough to lead him to the doors

of the so-called regular societies he would find these doors closed to him.

Were the question a matter of religion and not a matter of medicine the case would be different; for just as soon as Dr. Calvin is convinced that his fond parents were mistaken in bringing him up a Presbyterian it would matter not which way his mind turned, he would find doors open on all sides: Catholic or Universalist alike would be ready to receive him. Are the medical societies to be outdone in generosity and liberality by the churches?

There remains the question: What to do with the others? with the immediate expected answer from the others that "they can take care of themselves, and have no wish to be interfered with."

The mental attitude of the physician who believes in and makes use of homeopathy towards the other physicians who do not believe in homeopathy is a difficult one to picture. Our friend, "The Gentle Reader," has recently written a very entertaining essay on the West, treating the West as a state of mind, rather than as a locality or territory. He says: "Just where the geographical West begins it is not necessary to indicate; but the psychological West begins at the point where the center of interest suddenly shifts from the day before yesterday to the day after to-morrow." In like manner we might treat homeopathy as a state of mind rather than as a therapeutic law. It begins where the center of interest suddenly shifts from the modern sciences upon which the art of the physician is founded to the divine transcendental law promulgated by Hahnemann, the dogmatic theologian.

Now it is to be admitted that the modern homeopath is well trained in the modern sciences, but that just explains the difficulty of the present-day homeopath. It explains also the oft-repeated theme of discussion among homeopaths: Are we on a scientific basis or are we not? At one time the mind of the homeopath may be dominated by his scientific training, and at another time equally dominated by the transcendental law of Hahnemann. He may believe in the lessons learnt from Pathology, or he may openly assert that Pathology teaches him nothing. He may study Bacteriology and make use of its teachings, or he may openly sneer at the fellow who finds a new germ for every disease. Under the influence of his scientific training he accepts vaccina-

tion as a valuable measure against smallpox; but under the influence of the divine law of similars he proposes the use of vaccine virus administered internally after being triturated. (*Trans.*, 1904.)

There are two things, however, that he does always. *First*, he continually keeps before his mental vision a certain bogey that he calls the Allopath; and *second*, like one of the great political parties, he claims everything. A reduced death rate during the last five decades, the introduction and use of antitoxin, and, in fact, every advance made in the great field of practice of medicine, all alike are claimed by the homeopath. Up to the present date the extraordinary success of the medical corps of the Japanese army in preventing disease has not been claimed by homeopathy, but that will come. "The success of the Japanese army in the late war was largely due to hygienic methods. The whole field of hygiene is open to the homeopaths, and they constantly make use of hygienic methods; therefore the success of the Japanese army was wholly due to homeopathic methods." Some student of Whately or Jevons may call this bad logic and prate about an undistributed middle, but it really is good homeopathic logic.

As there are collections of gems from the poets, and gems from the operas, so we might have a volume of gems from the homeopaths, admitting at the outset that isolated sentences do not always represent fairly or altogether the best thoughts of a writer; but a few may help to illustrate the mental attitude of the modern homeopath.

On the Use of Antitoxin:—

"We must take to our credit the real, wonderful treatment of diphtheria by antitoxin. It is the most scientific, it is the most successful, it is the most sure cure of the medical profession to-day. We know what produces diphtheria and we take it. That is the general principle that Hahnemann taught." (*Gorham. Trans.*, 1900.) In the discussion that followed one stated "that he had tried to 'prove' antitoxin, but got symptoms of carbolic acid." Another said: "It is antidotal;" and a third: "It can never be shown that the use of antitoxin is homeopathic."

On Bacteriology:—

"To know that a bacterium is causing a disease is of far less moment than to know of a drug that will cure a disease." (*Van Denburg. Trans.*, 1900.)

On Diet:—

"Fifty years ago every homeopathic patient was dieted no matter what the disease, while dieting was almost unheard of among the Allopaths, except for diabetes and maybe for dyspepsia." (Moffat. *Trans.*, 1900.)

On Their Attitude Towards the Allopath:—

"We differ from all other schools in having a scientific basis for the application of drugs in disease. They are one and all without a clear, reasonable and comprehensive method of procedure, based upon experimental data and of logical and universal application." (Van Denburg. *Trans.*, 1900.)

"The Allopathic school is no more friendly to us now than it was in the past. It is fear alone that keeps it even civil." (Butler. *Trans.*, 1900.)

"Let us lose no opportunity to impress upon all this fact, that it is the Allopaths who are the sectarians just in so far as they close their minds against homeopathy." (Moffat. *Trans.*, 1903.)

"Ultimately a fair and thorough course of instruction in homeopathy will be an essential, not an optional part of the curriculum in each old school medical college." (Moffat. *Trans.*, 1903.)

"The Board of Health of this city [New York] employs eighty physicians to treat the sick babies of the town. These physicians carry their *poisons* with them, and are compelled to visit forty each day. I think I am warranted in considering it a result of this plan that this summer, the coolest we have had in years, the death rate among children has increased two to a thousand over previous years. It is a matter for us to think about and see if we can check it." (Applause.) (Seward. *Trans.*, 1904.)

"I think the action of the Board of Health in that matter is to a very large extent unwarranted." (Hamlin. *Trans.*, 1904.)

On Statistics and Boasting:—

"I also notice that through the efforts of our graduates the miasms are robbed of their terrors, hereditary weakness eliminated from the constitution, and malignancy eradicated from epidemics; consequently the greater average of life is attained, the larger degree of usefulness, and the addition of beauty of form and healthfulness of character." (Custis. *Trans.*, 1900.)

"Fewer days are lost to the community by sickness. Our

patients *pari passu* recover full health sooner than do those under allopathic treatment. They have comparatively no stage of convalescence; their stomachs have not been deranged by medication.

"People who have been habitually under homeopathic treatment become less and less susceptible to infection or contagion. The decrease in mortality under homeopathic treatment is one of the most marked effects of homeopathy upon the public health. Could our (Homeopathic) forefathers know with how many of us the homeopathic prescription was but an exception they would writhe in their graves." (Moffat.)

These last few sentences are from page 278 of the *Transactions* for 1900. It is to be hoped that by this time the homeopaths are busy writing homeopathic prescriptions, and making that the rule rather than the exception. For if they know how to increase the average length of life, and the duration and quality of health, and if they know how to reduce the susceptibility to infection and contagion, and yet do not put that knowledge into use, then they are guilty of a great wrong, and the spirits of not only the homeopathic forefathers, but of all good men, are likely to turn in their graves if they knew of it. It is never too late to mend; and to writhe in a grave must be very uncomfortable.

In fairness, and so as to show that all the gems are not of this quality, the following are given by way of contrast:

"The homeopathic specialist has become less and less a pure therapist, and his practice in many instances has become practically that of his old school colleagues." (Lewis. *Trans.*, 1900.)

"*Nolens volens* the homeopathic specialist must confine his work very largely to mechanical and surgical measures, and then his homeopathic designation is an absurdity." (Lewis. *Trans.*, 1900.)

"A well-defined conception of the so-called homeopathic law does not exist to-day in the minds of the physicians practising homeopathy." (Wanstall. *Trans.*, 1903.)

"If a drug has an action it is the action of that drug. If it is iodide of potash given in the twelfth, the thirtieth, or any other potency, whether prescribed homeopathically, antipathically, or allopathically, or any way you please, that drug is iodide of potash, and if it cures disease, it cures disease in only one way." (A. Wanstall. *Trans.*, 1903.)

"We claim to cure more, more quickly, and more gently than

they do in other hospitals. During the century just begun hospitals of all schools are the sources from which alone true information as to best methods of practice can be obtained. When we publish such statistics we naturally challenge other therapeutic methods to publish theirs. And when this is done—and not before—will any fair comparison between therapeutic methods be possible, and, until such comparisons are made, all other arguments and party strife are more than purposeless—they are ridiculous.” (C. Wesselhoëft. *Trans.*, 1900.)

If the spirit of fairness and wisdom indicated in the above from the late Dr. C. Wesselhoëft were common to partisans of both or all schools, then union between the schools would be almost an accomplished fact.

The question then is: Shall we unite? or, Can we unite with men holding such views as have been quoted? In a matter of this kind progress can only be made through compromise. If the homeopath is asked to give up his transcendentalism, is there nothing to be given up by the other side, or is orthodoxy one-sided in this case?

Should the time ever come when the two schools can unite without loss of self-respect, there is still one aspect of the question that is worth noting. “It is a far cry to Loch Awe,” and it seems going far afield to refer now to the recent church question in Scotland. The amount of interest in America taken on this matter of the churches in Scotland was indicated by the space given to it in such papers as the *Outlook* and the *Independent*. Briefly stated, it was something like this:

Previous to 1900 there were besides many minor varieties of Presbyterians, three principal bodies or varieties: the Established Church; the Free Church; and the United Presbyterian. The value of a union between any two or all three of these sects was every year becoming more apparent, and towards the end of the last century everything was arranged between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church for a union, the new Church to be called the United Free. This union had only become possible during the last twenty or thirty years through a very distinct broadening of religious views, more especially in regard to certain Presbyterian dogmas, the nature of which need not detain us. The very best legal advice had been obtained, and the number of those opposed to the union was so insignificant that it seemed as if nothing

was in the way of the desired end. Here was another case showing that

“The best laid plans o’ mice and men
Gang aft a’glee.”

Those opposed to the union, composed of some twenty clergymen from twenty-five thinly peopled parishes in the highlands or northern counties of Scotland, objected, carried their case to the courts, and eventually to the House of Lords. There, in the highest court in all the land, it was decided that these few adherents of ancient dogmas were legally entitled to all the property of the Free Church. The church property, consisting of three colleges, one in each of the three principal cities in Scotland, all the Free Church buildings throughout Scotland, much property abroad at foreign mission stations, the whole valued at about twenty-five million dollars, all belonged now to those few who still adhered to the dogmas in vogue when the Free Church seceded from the Established Church. It was pointed out and it was admitted that the few Northmen so suddenly enriched with Church property were not in a position to administer, and not capable of administering the property; but that plea was dismissed. It was pointed out that the greater bulk of the property and endowments had been acquired during the later years when adherence to these dogmas was not deemed essential either by the clergy or laymen, and that plea was also dismissed. The whole matter created much discontent among all classes in Scotland, and it was necessary for Parliament to take the matter up and adjust it to the satisfaction of all; and it all goes to show:

First, that what is dogma to-day may be anathema to-morrow.

Second, that when Benevolence endows colleges, religious or medical, with moneys or property to be used in the interests of a dogma, then Benevolence is blind as to the future. And

Third, that when union between the Schools of Medicine is about to become an established fact, then the true real homeopaths will step forward and claim that they are the true adherents of that doctrine and are entitled to all the property, hospitals and colleges, inasmuch as they were built and endowed for the purpose of teaching or practising that doctrine.